

Residential Parking Zone Policy Review
April 22 – Resident Sounding Board Meeting #1 Notes
May 16, 2008

Meeting objectives:

1) Obtain input regarding key issues and conflicts in the current program; 2) Generate ideas for new approaches and solutions.

Meeting Kickoff

After introductions Wayne Wentz, SDOT City Traffic Engineer kicked off the meeting by giving an overview of the RPZ Policy Review project. Key points he raised include the following:

- The RPZ Policy Review Project is reviewing the program to recommend changes to current policy, program and business processes, not here to recommend doing away with the program.
- SDOT's task is to look at the policy goals, practices and other issues with the RPZ program and answer how the RPZ program can be used to continue to help sustain livable neighborhoods and support the city's transportation goals in the Comprehensive Plan as well as the city's Race and Social Justice and Climate initiatives.
- SDOT's deliverables are new legislation to the Mayor's office that will describe new program changes covering the policy that guides the program, how permits are distributed, and how new RPZs are established. Draft recommendations in June and final recommendations in July are recommended.
- The sounding board's role is to comment on how it is working/not working. Think of the sounding board in terms of a focus group. The sounding board is important to the process because the issues associated with the RPZ are complex and SDOT needs the board's assistance to understand the workings of the program.

Meeting Comments and Questions

There was a wide-ranging discussion, with comments to the group and questions to city staff for the two hour-long meeting.

What are the challenges/issues facing the program?

- On First Hill there is a crunch on parking.
 - Some of the parking is gone due to construction.
 - Something needs to be done to replace parking lost during construction.
 - Visitors to large institutions are parking in the RPZ, rather than paying to park.

- Wary of allowing business and employee parking in the RPZ zones.
 - This option might work in South Lake Union, but not in Eastlake.
 - Err on the side of resident
- New residents with no off-street parking available to them are part of the problem.
- People who drive into the neighborhood and park their cars “Hide and Ride” who then go to either the University of Washington or to work are also, part of the problem.
- Eastlake has 2 hour/4hour/no parking/unrestricted parking.
 - Since the RPZ was established fourteen years ago, there seems to be a good balance.
 - Customers can park, but don’t have 8 hours of commuters parking in the RPZ.
 - Not a lot is “Broken” in Eastlake.
- To establish an RPZ, need five contiguous block faces.
 - In some instances, this requirement stops people from being able to get small zones implemented.
 - These situations need to be looked at on a case by case basis.
- How do RPZ’s interact with paid parking?
 - Staff answer is currently we have only one zone with paid parking, the Cascade Zone. In these instances, the residents can only park on those streets signed for RPZ.

Enforcement

- Zone 7’s (First Hill) biggest problem is lack of enforcement. Need a Parking Enforcement Officer dedicated to Zone 7.
- In Zone 6 (University Park) students in the past parked in the zone because they knew they could park there with little risk of a ticket.
 - The residents negotiated with the University of Washington to pay for the Parking Enforcement Officer (PEO) position and car.
 - Some of the sounding board members from the University Zones felt the dedicated PEO solved the problem. Other sounding members felt the PEO did not solve the problem.
 - The zones hours are 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
 - The PEO does not work those hours.
- People take advantage of the system if enforcement is toothless.
- Zone 12 (North Capitol Hill) has the same problem with lack of enforcement so staff/students at Seattle Prep/Bertschi take advantage of lax enforcement.

- Lack of enforcement is a real problem and when there isn't enough enforcement the RPZs don't work.
- In Zone 18 (Licton Springs) enforcement comes around enough and it works.
 - Best thing since sliced bread!!!
 - Each quarter when college starts, parking enforcement tickets illegal parkers.
 - Downside to enforcement is you have to move your car every 72 hours or get ticketed.
- Residents use guest permits on their vehicles, which is illegal.

Permit Eligibility per Household

- One household can get an enormous number of permits.
 - Rooming houses (unofficial)
 - Large old houses
 - BR's – 1 parking space
 - Duplex – 16 unrelated people, potentially 16 plus parking permits
- This practice of no cap on number of permits per household is not reasonable.
- Need to take into account how many off street spaces are available to the household.
 - What should be done if there are 50% more permits than spaces?
 - What should be done if there are 3 times more permits than spaces?
 - At what point does it become a problem to have more permits than spaces?
- Need data to know where there are problems.
- How many off-street spaces are available?
- We're feeling results of Land Use Code issues that do not require builders to build a minimum of off-street parking or bundle parking.
- On street parking conditions city-wide are not uniform.
- Need to consider absolute supply. Will vary from area to area
- In Eastlake what needs to be done about limited space is the following:
 - We need to create more spaces, rather than ration them.
 - Change 4 hour time limit signs to a shorter period.
 - Hesitant to say "you get one, you don't".
- City is allowing a lot of buildings to be built without parking. Causes problem for on- street parking.
- Hesitant to get into allocation game, though some limit might be reasonable.

- Escalate the price for a permit for successive permits.
- Without adequate transit, can't cut cars.
- Can't get places without cars, only downtown Seattle.

Zone Creation Process

- Zone creation process should remain a citizen initiated process.
- The expansion of Zone 18 (Licton Springs) was the following:
 - Labor intensive
 - Time intensive
 - Worthwhile to do, but it took a lot of effort/time
- Overall the RPZ system works, accomplishes its objectives.
- This revision process should be a citizen initiated process.
- The process to create RPZs should be flexible to account for changes in neighborhoods – ex. Transit Station/Light Rail Transit.
- The Rainier Valley will dramatically change with the introduction of Light Rail Transit.
- Extending existing RPZ's is another issue to consider.
- Zone 6 (University Park) used to have Saturday restrictions, but then SDOT put stickers on the Monday – Saturday signs to change them to Monday – Friday signs.
 - We need restrictions on Saturday's, not just game days.
 - On Friday/Saturday nights we need restrictions with RPZ decal only to cut down on rowdiness.
 - It would be easier to enforce the RPZ if it was RPZ permit all the time.
- (SDOT staff checked into the Zone 6 (University Park) Saturday restriction and learned that the zone was approved as a Monday – Friday zone and originally some signs were incorrectly installed in the neighborhood showing it as a Monday – Saturday zone. The problem with the signs was brought to SDOT's attention by residents of the neighborhood. Once SDOT learned of the mistake, SDOT made the necessary corrections to the signs.)
- The five contiguous block rule doesn't work everywhere, need exception guidelines.

- Question from SDOT staff: What if SDOT does design and takes out to community?
 - Eastlake – It was nasty. Did not have any problems with retail businesses. It was the office buildings that wanted 8 hours of on-street parking for their workers.
 - It was labor intensive and I wouldn't want to do it again, but it was very valuable to have us do it. A couple blocks didn't get in and they were mad and they're still not into the zone.
 - Ditto – it was valuable. The process got the neighborhood talking.
 - But for a multi-family neighborhood I would have wanted help from the City.
- Question from SDOT staff: What about multiple language-type neighborhoods? Don't necessarily know how to ask for an RPZ? Don't go to websites?
- I like the idea of SDOT's help on expanding existing RPZs.
- Gives communities options on how they want to do it. Ask the communities what help they want from SDOT.
- Mail is method of record for reaching people.
 - Can be a good tactic
 - Security apartment buildings
- RPZ's require discussion with your neighbors.
 - Door to door allowed us to reach huge area.
- Expansion is a very difficult animal.
- Percentage thresholds required – liked knowing that once we reached 60% threshold we'd get a RPZ.
- At the end we knew we didn't do the work for nothing. Made the petition process worthwhile.
- Don't make neighborhoods do a lot of work and then say no to an RPZ.

Permit Costs

- The fee for an RPZ permit should pay for the program. A profit from the RPZ program should not be made.
- Zones 6 & 10 (University Park and University District West) pay for their RPZ permits on an annual basis. However, many of the residents' permits are subsidized by the University of Washington.
- 72 Hour Rule can be a pain in an RPZ because cars left for more than 72 hours likely to be ticketed. (The 72-hour rule in force throughout Seattle.)

Broad change to existing zones

- Divide zones so they don't get too big? Any talk of that?
- Question from SDOT staff: What if cars were allowed to only park within X number of blocks from their residence?
 - Zones are one big parking lot.
 - "Double Zone" – A few people have permits for two zones because of where their residence is located.
 - Difficult for people to park who live in the border blocks of an RPZ.
- If SDOT stops using the RPZ sticker to identify residents, neighborhood people can't help with enforcement because they won't know who is in and who is out.
 - Comments like this really scare me. I live in an apartment with no parking – people call in and complain about my car. I have every right to park in the neighborhood. Without the permit, it wouldn't be clear to my neighbors that my vehicle is legally parked within the neighborhood.

Guest Permits

- At 10:00PM every inch of curb space in Eastlake is occupied.
 - People have parties and somehow we manage with the current policy of one guest permit per household.
 - If I have ten guests at once, my neighbors can't park.

Final Comments

- Existing RPZs – If RPZ went away we'd have a huge problem.
- RPZs - Keep for residents only. To give RPZs to businesses would encroach on agreements already made. (In a new zone, fine, but not existing.) It breaks an agreement.

Action Items

- SDOT staff to provide meeting notes to sounding board members for their review and finalization.
- SDOT staff to set-up next sounding board meeting for the end of June.